

Frédéric Bauden, “al-Maqrīzī”,  
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## al-Maqrīzī

[Taqī al-Dīn 'Abū al-'Abbās 'Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Qādir al-Maqrīzī]

ca 766–845 AH (1364–1442 AD). Egypt. An Islamic historian born in Cairo to a family of Syrian origin on his father's side. His father and grandfather were Hanbalite, but he was raised in the Hanafite school, which was the school of his relatives on his mother's side. Later on, at the age of 20 and after his father's death, he passed to the Shāfi'ite school for personal reasons. Educated as a traditionist, he started his public career as a secretary in the chancellery of state, a position he had to leave in 1390, though he may have resumed his work there in the following years. He then occupied several administrative and religious posts. Some time after 1420, he retired from his public functions and devoted his time to the writing of History.

Al-Maqrīzī is renowned as one of the most important historians of the Islamic civilization, second only to his master → Ibn Khaldūn. The appearance of older sources and recent research has forced scholars to revise their judgments in this respect. Al-Maqrīzī is now esteemed highly for having saved from oblivion entire sections of the history of Egypt by giving access to contemporary sources which are otherwise lost. His work as a historian, usually compared to that of a mere compiler, must be re-evaluated in the light of his numerous preserved autograph manuscripts, among which the most useful are his notebooks (autograph manuscript in Liège, BU, 2232). However he is often criticised for his carelessness in indicating his sources.

Al-Maqrīzī is the author of several works (chronicles, biographical dictionaries) dealing with the history of Egypt since the Muslim conquest. His agenda was fixed at an early date as he planned to divide the whole period into three books:

1. *'Iqd Djawāhir al-asfāt fī mulūk Misr wa-l-Fustāt* (The Necklace of the Jewel Case Regarding the Rulers of Misr and al-Fustāt), a history of Egypt from the Muslim conquest up to the arrival of the Fātimid dynasty (969), unfortunately lost.
2. *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā' bi-akhbār al-a'imma al-fātimiyyīn al-khulafā'* (The Edification of the True Believers in the History of the Fātimid

Imam-Caliphs), a history of the Fātimid dynasty probably written shortly after 1411 (autograph manuscript of vol. 1 in Erfurt/Gotha, Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek, ms. orient. A 1652). This is the only medieval monograph volume wholly devoted to the history of Egypt under the Fātimid rule, hence its importance for modern historians working on that period, though in his other works, significant parts deal with that dynasty too. This chronicle retraces the history of the Shiite dynasty which ruled over Egypt after its conquest in 968 until its fall in 1171, taking as starting point its appearance in Ifriqiyya (Tunisia). The data is presented according to the chronological succession of the reigns inside which the division into years is followed. This work would be even more valuable if al-Maqrīzī had systematically indicated his sources for each piece of information.

3. *al-Sulūk fī ma'rifat al-duwal wa-l-mulūk* (The Path to Knowledge of Dynasties and Kings), a history of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk dynasties started well before 1430 (autograph manuscript of vol. 1 in Istanbul, Süleymaniye kütüphanesi, YC 887). The author starts his history with the year 1171 during which Salāḥ al-dīn (Saladin) took over the power from the Fātimids in Egypt, establishing his own dynasty (the Ayyūbids) until its replacement by the Mamlūks in 1250. Al-Maqrīzī proceeded with recounting their history until a few months before his death (1441). For the older period, he obviously relied on earlier sources which he failed to mention. The technique he used consisted of mixing several reports into one, rewriting the whole in his own words. As for the contemporary sections, recent research has shown that he mainly relied on → Ibn al-Furāt until 1400–01. After that year, he was already active as a historian and mainly depended on information he had collected himself. This last section is precious for the details that drew his attention.

To these works, he later added: *al-Khabar 'an al-bashar* (The History of the Mankind), a general history of the world (still unpublished, autograph manuscript of vols. 1, 3–6 in Istanbul, Süleymaniye kütüphanesi, AS 3362, Fatih 4338–41); *Imtā' al-asmā' bi-mā li-l-rasūl min al-abnā' wa-l-aḥwāl wa-l-ḥafada wa-l-matā'* (The Delight of the Ears with the Children, Conditions, Offspring and Personal Belong-

- ings of the Messenger), a history of the Prophet (autograph manuscript of vol. 1 in Istanbul, Süleymaniye kütüphanesi, ŞAP 1847).
4. *al-Mawā'iz wa-l-i'tibār fī dhikr al-khitat wa-l-āthār* (Admonitions and Reflections on the Quarters and Monuments), a topographical history of Cairo and Egypt in general he started after 1405 (autograph manuscripts of the first draft in Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı, Ahmet III 1405 and 1472). Though mainly dealing with architectural history, the book proves also useful for the social and urban history of the capital and the dynasties that contributed to its expansion. The charge of plagiarism raised against him after his death, namely that he copied the draft of one of his colleagues who worked on the same subject, seems to have been confirmed. Nonetheless, this work remains of tremendous importance given the numerous sources, most of them now lost, he could consult.
  5. *al-Tārikh al-muqaffā al-kabīr* (The All-Comprehensive History), a biographical dictionary devoted to all the persons who lived or passed by Egypt from the Muslim conquest until his birth. It was never completed; sixteen volumes were found in draft form at his death, of which the equivalent of 9,6 volumes are preserved. It neatly completes the data for the latest periods available in his historical works. Autograph manuscripts in Leiden, UB, or. 1366, 3075, 14533; Paris, BnF, ar. 2144.
  6. *Durar al-'uqūd al-farīda fī tarādjim al-a'yān al-mufīda* (The Incomparable Pearl-Necklaces of the Useful Biographies of Notable Men), a biographical dictionary of his contemporaries started after 1413. Though organised as a dictionary, this work provides important data on rulers and officials besides the more classi-

cal scholars. Partial autograph manuscript in Erfurt/Gotha, Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek, ms. orient. A 1771; complete manuscript copied on the autograph in Mosul, al-Djalili private collection.

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